

Tilburg University

Secularization in a religiogeneous modernity

Hellemans, Staf

Published in:

Secularization and Social Integration. Papers in Honor of Karel Dobbelaere

Publication date:

1998

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in Tilburg University Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Hellemans, S. (1998). Secularization in a religiogeneous modernity. In R. Laermans, B. Wilson, & J. Billiet (Eds.), *Secularization and Social Integration. Papers in Honor of Karel Dobbelaere* (pp. 67-81). University Press.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

SOCIOLOGIE VANDAAG / SOCIOLOGY TODAY

Volume 4

SECULARIZATION AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

PAPERS IN HONOR OF KAREL DOBBELAERE

Edited by
Rudi Laermans, Bryan Wilson & Jaak Billiet

Universiteit Utrecht
BIBLIOTHEEK CENTRUM UN



Leuven University Press

BIE

HT

Secularization in a religiogeneous modernity

STAF HELLEMANS

UNIVERSITEIT UTRECHT, THE NETHERLANDS

During the 1960's 'the secularization thesis emerged as the most powerful theoretical explanation of the relationship between religion and modernity' (Dobbelaere, 1987: 110). The thesis and the related secularization theories have occupied, until well in the 80s, a pivotal place in the sociology of religion. The appeal of this secularization perspective can be explained by referring to the crucial experience that students interested in religion made during these years. This experience had to do with the contrast between an unprecedented decline and crisis of the big churches on the one hand, and a triumphant secular modernity with its mass consumption benefits on the other side. Meanwhile, times have changed again. In the United States and in many, if not most non-Western parts of the world, it is rather difficult to discern a clear trend towards secularization. In Europe, where secularization has made more headway, there seems to be enough room left for religious life after the era of secularization. This lasting vitality of religion in modernity is difficult to explain from a secularization perspective, focusing as it does on the outcast status of religion in modernity. I, therefore, propose to take a different stance and to start not from the opposition between, but from the close entanglement of religion and modernity. This new perception carries with it a shift in theoretical perspective from secularization to religious modernization, from a secular towards a religiogeneous modernity. This new perspective – the continuous interplay between, and thus the permanent creation of religion in modernity – doesn't deny a priori the possible occurrence of secularization processes. In fact, it claims – as I will try to show in the third part of this article – to foster a more open and less dramatic understanding of the secularization issue.

A GENERATION OF SECULARIZATION THEORISTS

Building on the work of predecessors like Max Weber, who hardly used the term secularization, and the post-war liberal-protestant theology of secularization like Gogarten e.a., the great breakthrough of the secularization theory in the field of the sociology of religion took place in the mid 1960's with the publication of

three books: Wilson's 'Religion in Secular Society' (1966), Luckmann's 'Invisible Religion' (1967) – an expanded revision of a German version of 1963 – and Berger's 'The Sacred Canopy' (1967). During the following years the theory has been repeated, variegated and expanded on a number of points – I especially think of Martin's attempt to trace back diverse secularization patterns (Martin, 1978). Finally, at the turn of the eighties, the theory has become more or less canonized, in part due to the influential 'Trend Report' of Dobbelaere (1981) (see Tschannen, 1992: 249-250).

Looking at the birth data of these authors – Wilson (°1926), Luckmann (°1927), Berger (°1929), Martin (°1928), Dobbelaere (°1933) –, it becomes clear that the elaboration of the sociological theory of secularization is the achievement of one generation. They all went through the same basic contrasting experiences. At the one hand, they experienced the triumph of modernity: the post-war stabilisation of a viable, pluralistic democracy and the victory of a social market economy, which brought an unprecedented rise in living conditions for the population as a whole. The former critics of modernity, like the socialist labour movement and the churches, found themselves at odds with this burgeoning modernity. On the other hand, linked with these developments, the big churches slid in a major crisis. Still hidden but already perceptible at the, particularly intellectual, fringes of the churches in the fifties, the crisis burst out in the sixties, widening in the seventies and eighties. The crisis was so extensive, all embracing and sweeping that it obviously attracted all attention. Such a great hitherto unknown crisis demanded an equally fundamental explanation. And so, for this generation, not only for the sociologists of religion but for religiously interested people in general, the secularization perspective became the basic denominator and the common frame to make sense of those disturbing and contrasting experiences – the rise of secular modernity and the decline of (organised) religion (the autobiographical account of Dobbelaere, 1994 is telling in this respect). The sociological secularization theory gained such a paramount importance because it constituted, for a whole generation, the theoretical translation and expression of these basic contrasting experiences.

The secularization theorists did not have to rely solely on their actual experience of an insurmountable contrast or an inherent opposition of religion and modernity. They could, for intellectual support, rely on an old, modern tradition. For predictions, relating the progress of modernity with the waning of (organised) religion, go back to the eighteenth century at least, including such dominating intellectual figures as Comte, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. These predictions finally seemed to become true. In the field of sociology itself, there

was the work of Max Weber, the patriarch par excellence of the sociology of religion. Weber himself associated modernity with an inescapable 'disenchantment' of the modern world, an 'Entzauberung' that would not only marginalise religion, but would transform modern society itself into an 'iron cage' of systemic logics and bureaucratic rules. The breakthrough of Protestantism, this co-founder of modernity, was at the same time the last society building achievement of religion (Weber, 1920).

The combination of the actual, reiterating experiences with such a long and prestigious intellectual tradition, both emphasizing the opposition of religion and modernity, gave the secularization theorists a strong feeling of inner certainty about their propositions. Even such a careful author as Peter Berger, who is constantly looking for new, religion reinvigorating possibilities, concluded his 'Sacred Canopy' with the statement: '... it is safe to predict that the future of religion everywhere will be decisively shaped by the forces that have been discussed in this and the preceding chapters – secularization, pluralization and "subjectivation" ...' (Berger, 1967: 171). In the same sense, only more radical, Dobbelaere ends his analysis of the development of religion in Belgium as follows: 'The future of the religious meaning system is thus very precarious: all indicators indicate that ever fewer Belgians will underwrite it in the future. The Catholic Church, like all other denominations, will be further marginalised as a consequence of functional differentiation, and will accordingly become less and less plausible: as a result, membership rates (kerkelijkheid) and participation rates (kerksheid) will decline further. The underlying reason of all this is the functional differentiation process, bringing in its wake specialization, rationalization, mechanization and segmentation of relations ...' (Dobbelaere, 1984: 110 – my translation; similar conclusions are drawn in a more general way in his Furfey Lecture on Europe, Dobbelaere, 1987: 131-133). Wallis and Bruce, in presenting and defending the orthodox model, summarize the secularization perspective in the same confident way: 'The secularization thesis ... asserts that the social significance of religion diminishes in response to the operation of three salient features of modernization ..., namely (1) social differentiation, (2) societalization, and (3) rationalization (Wallis & Bruce, 1992: 8-9).

Citations in the same vein could easily be multiplied. They all contain the same message: modernization brings secularization in its wake, there is an abyss between religion and modernity, religion and modernity stand in a relationship of mutual opposition. The secularization theorists do emphasize that this opposition or antithesis is not a matter of ill-will or politics. They think of it as a structural property of modernity. Former secularist movements like liberals and

socialists have as a matter of fact long given up their anti-religious stance. Secularization is thus seen as the result of objective processes in modern society, of modernization in general or of its many concomitants or sub-processes (industrialization, urbanization, rationalization, differentiation and the like). The emphasis on the structural sources of secularization clearly demonstrates to what extent this generation of secularization theorists felt obliged to make this personally experienced opposition between religion and modernity the vantage point of their reflections and theorizing.

Familiar with the religious developments – and mostly, like Peter Berger, themselves religiously committed –, the secularization theorists did not conclude from the sensed opposition between religion and modernity that the former would totally disappear. Nevertheless, it was clear to them that secularization posed a major problem to religion: how was religion in this secular society still possible and in what form? The answers of the secularization theorists are threefold.

In the first place, they expected religion to survive in modernity, but it would occupy a much more modest place compared with the glorious past. Marginalization of the churches was, so they thought, inevitably the other side of the secularization process. Wallis and Bruce phrase it like this: 'Religion is a singularly resilient phenomenon which is likely to survive as privatized belief and practice, at society's margins or in its interstices, and may even revive in times of trauma or major social transformation which may give it new work to do' (Wallis & Bruce, 1992: 21). By their final words, they mean that the crucial function of religion – to relate men to the ultimate – doesn't suffice in normal times to give religion a prominent place in modern society.

In the second place, religion is, according to the secularization theorists, caught in a dilemma: either religions adapt to modernity or their following and importance will shrink. The dilemma is devouring, remaining big but losing meaning, or remaining religiously defiant but becoming small as a result. Religious change is thought of here from a secularization perspective. Either one opts for internal secularization, for disenchantment of the religious thinking and practice, for the influx of modern values. Or, if one refuses to adapt, external secularization will follow (see esp. Luckmann, 1967, Ch. 2).

Finally, the secularization theorists see religion caught in a process of dis-institutionalization and evaporation. With the waning of the public functions of religion as well as of the support by public authorities, religion is now localized in the individual. This subjectivation of religion makes it less visible. It exhorts the individuals less to collectively prone exhibitions but rather to a search for

personally rewarding religious experiences. It incites individuals to amalgamate their religion syncretistically out of elements of diverse religious traditions. People will be, in the end, still religious, but it will be, according to the famous title of Luckmann's English book version, an 'invisible religion'.

It will be clear by now that the secularization theorists still see room left for religious experiences and actions. But it is equally clear that, thinking as they do from the opposition between (organized) religion and (post-war) modernity, they are in a pessimistic mood concerning the future of religion. In their eyes, the glorious times have passed for the big churches and decay in modernity is their predestined fate.

RELIGIOGENEOUS MODERNITY AND RELIGIOUS MODERNIZATION

The secularization theorists of the generation Berger, Dobbelaere, Luckmann, Wilson e.a. have done what they had to do, to reflect thoroughly the big religious changes and developments of their time. But meanwhile, the religious climate has changed. It is questionable whether the United States underwent a process of secularization at all (Greeley, 1989; Finke, Stark, 1992). Moreover, in contradiction to the expectations nurtured by the secularization theory, the orthodox churches and movements have experienced progress there, whereas the liberal, mainstream churches have lost ground. In the former, now rapidly modernizing Third World, religion has emerged more emphatically on the public scene. The Islamic revival has attracted most attention, but religious revivals – linked with an accelerating modernization! – are also on the rise in India, where government power is in the hands of the Hindu-nationalist party BJP since March '98, and in Africa, with its many, growing independent churches. Even in Europe, the core area of secularization since the sixties, some indications suggest – although church membership and church participation are still declining – a renewed rise of interest in religion. The longing for spirituality, the one million participants at the world assembly of Catholic youth in Paris in August 1997 and the recent fascination of prominent unchurched intellectuals in religion as a subject matter (f.e. Derrida, 1996 in France and Apostel, 1998 in Belgium), all witness this renewed interest.

The resurgent appeal of religion in general and the rise of orthodox and fundamentalist religious movements in particular stand in contradiction with the explanatory drive of the secularization perspective. Starting, as we have seen, from the opposition between religion and modernity, the secularization theorists were expecting further religious decay, doctrinal liberalization and ritual 'disenchantment'. Sensing the contradiction between theory and evolving practice,

it is no wonder that many critics of the secularization paradigm, historians as well as sociologists, have come up during the past years (see Bruce, 1992 for a discussion between proponents and adversaries). Some critics, like the group around Stark, Finke and Iannaccone, reduce the secularization phenomenon to a reparable *accident de parcours*, due to 'lazy' churches (Finke & Stark, 1992; Stark & Iannaccone, 1994). The frontal attacks of Stark c.s. on the secularization perspective have certainly helped clear our minds, but their denial of any major importance of the secularization phenomenon in modernity seems to me premature. In my opinion, the issue of secularization remains important and is in fact still open (cfr. *infra*). I therefore propose to try out another, less direct perspective, approaching the secularization issue not head on, but, as it were, from the sidelines, from neutral ground. I thereby want to acknowledge the particular influence of the work of Luhmann (Luhmann, 1977, 1989) and of Kaufmann cum suis (Kaufmann, 1979; Gabriel & Kaufmann, 1980; Gabriel, 1992).

The perspective I want to advocate does not start from the opposition between religion and modernity, which lies at the base of secularization theory, but takes the opposite idea, the close entanglement of religion and modernity, as its point of departure (Hellemans, 1997). Religion is not excluded as an alien outside of modernity, but is considered, even in its orthodox expression, as an integral part of modernity. Just as systems interact with their environment by trying out several options, so do religions look out for and sort out possibilities and options that arise in modern society. I call this ongoing process of religious reproduction in a modern societal environment religious modernization.

Two aspects in this process are quintessential. First, religious modernization has nothing to do with a more or less forced adaptation to modernity, as the secularisation theorists implied in constructing the dilemma between adaptation or decay. Modernity is not an unequivocal thing. It allows a multiplicity of diverse forms. Individuals and collectivities do not either conform passively, but are trying out strategies incessantly and actively in view of the different possibilities which modernity offers, and the diverse tasks and demands, they are facing. They engage themselves in such strategies without a warrant of success. In the second place, through this ongoing process of religious modernization, religions are altering continuously and fundamentally. The religions after 1800 are not 'traditional' religions in the usual sense, but, although often appealing to ancient traditions, are thoroughly modern religions. That the conservative, orthodox or fundamentalist religions bear many modern traces – I would go further and claim their wholesale modernity –, has meanwhile been historically and empiri-

cally grounded by research (see for Catholicism a.o. Gabriel & Kaufmann, 1980; Gabriel, 1992 and for fundamentalism Marty & Appleby, 1991).

The secularization perspective emphasizes the secularizing dynamic of modernity, considering modern society to be secular, non-religious (cfr. the aptly forged, to an inherent opposition pointing title 'Religion in Secular Society' (Wilson, 1966)). The religious modernization perspective instead sees the prospect of the change and renewal of religions in modernity. New religious forms are constantly tried out, or, more often still, old forms and contents are related to the new conditions of life. To exhibit this permanent generation of religion in modernity, I call modernity religiogeneous. The idea proper of religious production in modernity is of course not a new one (cfr. Luckmann, 1967; Hervieu-Léger, 1986). My only intent in proposing this conceptual twin religiogeneous modernity and religious modernization, is to draw the attention to the integral modernity of the religions in modernity, including the ones that, with or without ancient traditions, oppose modernity.

It will be clear by now that the starting-points, that I have chosen for approaching religion in modernity, differ radically from the ones of the secularization perspective. Instead of the opposition the interrelatedness of religion and modernity is emphasized. Instead of the pressure to adapt, in comes the modernizing dynamics of religion. Instead of a secularizing or secular modernity a religiogeneous one is postulated. However, this does not, in my opinion, imply the absence of major secularization processes in modernity. Indeed, new religious strategies are constantly been trying out – and so re(new)ed religion is generated –, but these strategies are not bound to succeed, or to succeed in as much as earlier strategies did in the past. Religious modernization can go along with secularization. The two processes do not exclude one another. Furthermore, the different focus of the religious modernization perspective – to track the transformations of religions in modernity – allows the tracing back and testing of secularizing developments. From the new perspective, secularization becomes a real possibility. It's no longer an *a priori* result, deduced out of a theoretical frame that opposes religion and modernity.

TRACING SECULARIZATION PROCESSES

Four meanings of secularization

Like all major concepts in science, secularization is an all-round concept, carrying different meanings and thus causing much confusion. Several attempts at conceptual clarification have been made. One of the most influential attempts

stems from Karel Dobbelaere. In his 1981 trend report, he circumscribed secularization as a multidimensional concept. He discerned three different dimensions of secularization: macro-societally, religion was reduced to a subsystem, on the level of other subsystems like the economy, the polity, the educational system; on the micro-level, membership rates and participation rates in organised religions were decreasing; on the meso-level, religions were undergoing changes in the direction of rationalization, the so-called internal secularization (Dobbelaere, 1981: 15-30). This three-fold distinction has since then been commonly made (see, for instance, Laeyendecker, 1989; Casanova, 1994: Ch. 1). In reviewing the evidence concerning the occurrence of secularization processes, I will use this distinction as the leading thread. I will begin the review, however, with another meaning attached, until recently quite often, to secularization, a meaning that in my opinion should better be dropped, i.e. secularization as privatization.

Individualization instead of privatization

One can find secularization, meaning privatization, a.o. by Berger (1967), Luckmann (1967) and Luhmann (1977) – as 'Privatisierung des Entscheidens', the privatization of decision making. With the concept of privatization, Berger and Luckmann wanted to highlight that religion in modern society is no longer localized in the public institutions of the state – cfr. the separation of church and state –, but is now rooted in the private sphere of the family and the individual. From this correct observation, however, some draw the conclusion that privatised religion henceforth would be irrelevant to the public sphere (f.e. Berger, 1967: esp. 132-133; Luckmann, 1967: Ch. 6 formulates the issue more carefully). Casanova (1994) has demonstrated at book-length that religions still act on the public scene and still have political impact in contemporary society (Spain, Poland, Brazil and the United States are his cases).

During the past years therefore, the concept of privatization has to a large extent been replaced by another one, namely the concept of individualization. The latter is to be preferred because it points more exactly to the new area of localization of religion in modern society, the individual. It has the additional advantage of replacing the identification of privatization with secularization by a more complex, empirically open relationship between individualization and secularization (I have to add that Berger and Luckmann, in speaking of subjectivation, had this in mind). Individualization may, but is not bound, to end up in secularization. Instead of being a dimension of secularization, individualization in this way is seen as an important context for religion in modern society.

Secularization and differentiation

Secularization has always been connected in the first place to the laicisation, on a macro-societal level, of modern society. The pope is no longer, as during the crusades, the politically leading figure of the West. The prime minister or the king is, as still was sometimes the case in Richelieu's times, no more a cardinal or bishop. Science is no longer a religious matter. The polity, the economy, science, the arts, recreational activities, and so on, have in modernity escaped from the tutelage of the churches. The latter have willy nilly been forced to comply with this loss of power. Thus goes the standard version of the secularization theory, synthesized with headings as compartmentalization, segmentation and, particularly, differentiation.

That such differentiation processes occurred, is not disputed. The question is not so much the occurrence of differentiation processes, but the effect these processes have for the place of religion in modern society. Differentiation, as formulated, is commonly considered from a secularization perspective. It is seen as a manifestation or dimension of secularization. Religion is thereby only presented as a victim, which is affected in its power base by the differentiation of the other spheres of life. This view does not take into account that religions can themselves drive forward processes of differentiation and that differentiation can also enhance the presence of religion in society. That religion, from very early times on, was able to differentiate itself as a particular field in society, constituted the base for the prominence of religion in most agrarian societies and civilizations (Luhmann, 1989). Religious differentiation can go along with societal and political prominence in modern society too. The further differentiation of religion in modernity – esp. the separation of church and state – made the religions more independent of external powers. In conjunction with improved organization building – see f.e. the centralization process in the Catholic church after 1800, churches and religious movements could better mobilise their following then before and could again acquire, now as modern mass movements, the central position that they apparently lost in the revolution era. Differentiation, thus not only happens to occur outside and to the detriment of the religious sphere. It can also be urged from within to help reach and reorganize the other spheres from a reorganized and reinvigorated religious sphere. The Protestant and especially the Catholic formation of mass movements, subcultures and pillarized structures in Europe between 1850 and 1960 are fine cases (Helleman, 1990). Liberation theology and the fundamentalist movements are two contemporary examples. These cases prove that, with thriving religious modernization in the back, pre-modern forms of societal prominence

can be – at least partially and temporarily – replaced by modern forms. They demonstrate that religion retains in modernity its particular totalizing capacity, allowing it to organize other spheres of life from its own differentiated sphere.

As a result, differentiation, as a master variable of modernization, cannot be equated with secularization. One has to consider the locus of the differentiation process and, in the end, the interaction between and the end result of the manifold differentiation processes.

Internal secularization or rationalization

After the example of external secularization – the decline of the big churches –, the concept of internal secularization was introduced as another dimension of secularization in the sixties and seventies (cfr. Luckmann, 1967; Isambert, 1976). It made possible the designation of several very profound internal changes, which the big churches were going through, under one single heading: the broad reception, also by Catholic intellectuals, of liberal-Protestant exegesis and theology (Bultmann, Bonhoeffer, Tillich, god-is-dead-theology) and, especially on the Catholic side, the 'disenchantment' with rituals and the waning interest in the exuberant worship of saints and Maria, and in processions and pilgrimages.

In the late sixties and seventies, this internal secularization or rationalization was considered to be an irreversible trend (cfr. Berger, 1967, following Weber). In the nineties, there isn't much left of an empirical trend towards internal secularization. Today, some observers even claim that only conservative, strict churches can be strong (Iannaccone, 1994). As far as I know, there is no research in depth going on on the topic. Does this mean that the idea of an internal secularization or rationalization as a fundamental trend in modernity is simply wrong and must be discarded?

Surely, no less than before religions may take several routes to survey the holy in modernity. The liberal routes, trusting the searching capabilities of the individual and based on the scientific critique of texts and traditions, are but one current. The orthodox or fundamentalist routes, which are nowadays time and again presented as the only possible or the only successful ones, are but just another current. The trend is not one of domination of one current, but towards pluralisation. This is in line with a religious modernization perspective, which emphasizes the multiplicity of strategies being incessantly tried out.

Some parallels with developments in science and the arts are in this respect instructive. In the scientific field, the long cherished idea of a progressive unveiling of the naked truth about the world has been replaced today by the notion

that science produces ever a new many, contradicting theories. And in the world of art, abstract art has been shown to be not *the* form of art of modernity, but only one art current in modernity, be it the most important one. Can this last point, or something like it, also be said in religious matters? If so, religious rationalization can not be postulated as a clear, straightforward trend towards an all-embracing endpoint, but should be thought of as a sort of dynamic axis, attracting and repelling an array of possible religious routes in modernity. I am not sure whether this proposal makes much sense. Anyway, I consider it too early to abandon altogether the fascinating idea of a major trend towards internal secularization in modernity.

Secularization as the decline of organized religiosity

What of this last dimension of secularization: is the following of organised religions indeed declining or retreating with the advancement of modernity? This topic, so it seems to me, constitutes the hard core of the whole secularization debate. Without the spectacular decline in many parts of the Western world of membership rates and, particularly, of participation rates, the secularization issue would never have attracted so much attention. And, without it, the secularization perspective would, for sure, not have been raised to the paradigmatic status, from which the relationship between religion and modernity has been viewed for so long (cfr. the quotation on the first page from Dobbelaere, 1987:110).

There is another reason to consider the dimension of unchurching to be at the heart of the secularization debate: the issue is still hotly debated. Empirical evidence in the sixties and seventies seemed to confirm without doubt a huge, irreversible decline. From the eighties onwards, the data were becoming less unequivocal: 1) In the West, Europe continued to exhibit the prognosticated, decreasing line (Jagodzinsky, Dobbelaere, 1995). But in the United States, there seems to be no such decline (Greeley, 1989; Finke & Stark, 1992). Two opposing models of the future of religion can be deduced out of this contrasting trends: further marginalization of the churches as a consequence of modernization, as in Europe, or, on the contrary, prospering churches, especially orthodox ones, which have recovered after a one time relapse in the sixties and seventies, as in America. 2) Conflicting information also comes from the now rapidly modernizing non-Western world. In the Islamic world, religious participation seems to be on the increase: more mosques, more attendance of mosque services, more pilgrims at Mecca, stricter observance of Ramadan. Japan and Buddhist South-East Asia, on the other hand, seem to confirm the secularization trend going along with modernization. 3) Looking back in time does not make

things easier. The early secularization theories relied on figures of membership and participation from 1900 onwards, still more from 1945 onwards. For the time before 1900, fragmentary data and some reports of eyewitnesses were used. However, recent systematic historical research has shown that initial modernization before 1900, at least in Great Britain, did not coincide at all with decline in church membership and attendance, but did go along with at least quantitative stabilization and qualitative intensification (Brown, 1992). The unchurching of Europe, following this lead, is a twentieth century phenomenon. Secularization, in this reasoning, is not a byproduct of modernization as such, but, maybe, only of advanced modernity, in some parts of the world.

Reviewing the available evidence, I feel compelled to leave open the answer to the question of whether secularization is occurring in this central dimension. The next question, which subsequently arises, concerns the sort of research that has to be set up in order to be able to say more on the topic in the near future. I propose the following suggestions: 1) More research on a comparative, international scale has to be done, transcending the borders of the national state. Studies which consider and try to explain developments in Europa as a whole are rare (fine exceptions are Martin, 1978, and Jagodzinsky, Dobbelaere, 1995). Even more rare and more urgent are comprehensive comparisons between the two contrasting cases, Europe and America (though Wilson, 1966 is an early example). 2) The number of cases have also to be multiplied. Until now, secularization research is an exclusively Western business. It is time now, considering the modernization of the non-Western world, to involve the other world regions and world religions in secularization research. Of course, this will not be easy – be it alone because only Christianity has built up organized churches with individual membership. 3) When data on other world regions and world religions become available, it seems likely that the participation figures will show a variegated religious landscape. One should then try, following Martin's example for the West (Martin, 1978), to trace several patterns of secularization or non-secularization throughout the world, looking, as Martin did, at the nature of world religion and its embeddedness in society. 4) More historical research is needed. The, in my opinion, very plausible thesis that initial modernization does stabilize and even enhances participation rates and affords religions the opportunity of intensifying the religious bonding with their following, needs further scrutiny. I expect that the global identification of modernization with secularization will have to be dropped in favour of a distinction between different phases or periods in modernity. Such a periodisation leaves room for the possible lack of (this dimension of) secularization in the phase of initial modernization. It enables

thinking on the possible occurrence of a secularization crisis in a second era of more advanced modernity and on the possible termination and even the reversal of secularization in the future.

CONCLUSION

Finally, I want to draw three main conclusions: 1) Secularization as an issue will remain important. As a matter of fact, the issue is still open. 2) The secularization perspective and theories, bequeathed to us by the generation of secularization theorists – among them Karel Dobbelaere –, will continue to raise attention and to influence future thinking. 3) However, secularization as a perspective cannot retain the paradigmatic status, it once had. Religious developments in East and West in the past years have rendered such a perspective, which emphasizes the inherent opposition between religion and modernity, less plausible. I propose to look at religion as an integral part of modernity, to focus on the religiogeneous processes taking place in modernity. Organised religion in modernity is the ever changing product of reiterating processes of religious modernization.

This shift in perspective is thoroughly different from the secularization paradigm: (a) secularization processes may still occur, but are no longer a more or less necessary by-product of modernization; (b) the old religions in modernity are not to be considered as out-of-time relicts of a pre-modern age, nor is theological, moral and ritual liberalisation the only possible response left to them; (c) keeping in mind the ubiquity of religious modernization processes eradicates the apocalyptic colouring, associated in the secularization paradigm with occurring secularization processes. In this way, secularization is being re-styled from a paradigmatic vantage point to an empirical issue, to become part of a theory of religious modernization in a religiogeneous modernity.

REFERENCES

- Apostel, L. (1998). *Atheistische spiritualiteit*. Brussel: VUB-Pers.
- Berger, P. (1967). *The sacred canopy. Elements of a sociological theory of religion*. New York: Doubleday.
- Brown, C.G. (1992). A revisionist approach to religious change. In: S. Bruce (Ed.). *Religion and modernization. Sociologists and historians debate the secularization thesis*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 31-58.
- Bruce, S. (Ed.) (1992). *Religion and modernization. Sociologists and historians debate the secularization thesis*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Casanova, J. (1994). *Public religions in the modern world*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, J. (1996). Foi et savoir. Les deux sources de la 'religion' aux limites de la simple raison. In: J. Derrida & G. Vattimo (Eds.). *La religion*. Paris: Seuil, p. 9-86.

- Dobbelaere, K. (1981). Secularization: A multi-dimensional concept. *Current Sociology*, 29(2): 1-216.
- Dobbelaere, K. (1984). Godsdienst in België. In: J. Kerkhofs & R. Rezsöházy (Eds.). *De stille ommekeer. Oude en nieuwe waarden in het België van de jaren tachtig*. Tiel: Lannoo, p. 67-111.
- Dobbelaere, K. (1987). Some trends in European sociology of religion: The secularization debate. *Sociological Analysis*, 48(2), 107-137.
- Dobbelaere, K. (1994). Voor vrijheid en eer. In: K. Puype (Ed.). *De Tijd in Teksten en Tekens*. Brugge: Stichting Kunstboek, p. 73-88.
- Finke, R. & R. Stark (1992). *The churching of America 1776-1990*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Gabriel, K. (1992). *Christentum zwischen Tradition und Postmoderne*. Freiburg/ Breisgau: Herder.
- Gabriel, K. & F.-X. Kaufmann (Hrsg.) (1980). *Zur Soziologie des Katholizismus*. Mainz: Grünewald.
- Greeley, A.M. (1989). *Religious change in America*. Cambridge, Mass.
- Hellemans, S. (1990). *Strijd om de moderniteit. Sociale bewegingen en verzuiling in Europa sinds 1800*. Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven.
- Hellemans, S. (1997). *Religieuze modernisering*. Utrecht: KTU.
- Hervieu-Léger, D. (1986). *Vers un nouveau christianisme? Introduction à la sociologie du christianisme*. Paris: Cerf.
- Iannaccone, L.R. (1994). Why strict churches are strong. *American Journal of Sociology*, 99(5): 1180-1211.
- Isambert, F.-A. (1976). La sécularisation interne du christianisme. *Revue française de sociologie*, 17(4): 573-589.
- Jagodzinski, W. & K. Dobbelaere (1995). Secularization and church religiosity. In: J.W. Van Deth & E. Scarbrough (Eds.). *The impact of values (Beliefs in Government Vol. IV)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 76-119.
- Kaufmann, F.-X. (1979). *Kirche begreifen. Analysen und Thesen zur gesellschaftlichen Verfassung des Christentums*. Freiburg: Herder.
- Laeyendecker, L. (1989). Secularisatie: een systematische verkenning. In: A. Houtepen (Ed.). *Secularisatie: noodlot of opdracht*. Leiden-Utrecht, p. 5-54.
- Luckmann, Th. (1967). *The invisible religion. The problem of religion in modern society*. New York: Macmillan.
- Luhmann, N. (1977). *Funktion der Religion*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Luhmann, N. (1989). Die Ausdifferenzierung der Religion. In N. Luhmann (Ed.). *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik*. Bd. 3. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, p. 259-357.
- Martin, D. (1978). *A general theory of secularization*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Marty, M. & R.S. Appleby (1991). Conclusion: An Interim Report on a Hypothetical Family. In: M. Marty & R.S. Appleby (Eds.). *Fundamentalisms observed*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 814-842.
- Stark, R. & L. Iannaccone (1994). A supply-side reinterpretation of the 'secularization' of Europa. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 33(3): 230-252.
- Tschannen, O. (1992). *Les théories de la sécularisation*. Genève: Droz.

- Wallis, R. & S. Bruce (1992). Secularization: The orthodox model. In: S. Bruce (Ed.). *Religion and modernization. Sociologists and historians debate the secularization thesis*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 8-30.
- Weber, M. (1920). Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus. In: M. Weber (Ed.). *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie I*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, p. 17-206.
- Wilson, B.R. (1966). *Religion in secular society*. London: C.A. Watts.